



## **TULAREMIA** **(*Francisella tularensis*)**

### **What is TULAREMIA?**

Tularemia is a bacterial disease (*Francisella tularensis*) that infects both man and animals. Although many wild and domestic animals can carry the bacteria, rabbits are most often involved in disease outbreaks. Tularemia has the potential for use as an agent of bioterrorism if contaminated dust is inhaled, or if contaminated food or water is ingested.

### **Who gets tularemia?**

People who spend much time outdoors are at greatest risk. People who contact flesh or blood from infected animals are at greatest risk of contracting this disease. High-risk occupations include laboratory workers, farmers, veterinarians, sheep workers, hunters, trappers or meat handlers.

### **How is tularemia spread?**

Tularemia is not spread from person-to-person.

There are many routes of human exposure to the tularemia bacteria, such as:

- Contacting the skin or mucous membranes with blood or tissue while handling, dressing, or skinning infected animals;
- Contact with meat from an infected animal;
- Contact with fluids from infected ticks or biting flies;
- The bite from an infected tick or biting fly;
- Handling or eating insufficiently cooked rabbit meat (rabbit meat can remain infective even after being frozen for several years).
- Drinking contaminated water;
- Inhaling dust from contaminated soil; and
- Handling contaminated paws or pelts of animals.

### **What are the symptoms of tularemia?**

Symptoms depend on whether the bacteria enter through the skin, gastrointestinal tract, or lungs. Usually, there is an ulcerative skin lesion and swollen glands. Ingesting the organism produces a throat infection, abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Inhalation produces a fever, possibly with a pneumonia-like illness.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms can appear within one to 21 days. Typically, they occur within three to five days.

### **What is the treatment for tularemia?**

Certain antibiotics, including streptomycin, gentamicin and tobramycin, are effective in treating tularemia.

### **How can the spread of tularemia be prevented?**

- Wear rubber gloves when skinning or handling animals, especially rabbits.
- Thoroughly cook wild rabbit, muskrat and squirrel meat before eating.
- Avoid drinking, swimming or working in untreated water.
- Wear light colored clothing to spot ticks.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET on you skin or permethrin (Permanone) on your clothing. Follow the directions on the container, especially before using on children.

**24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156**

Revised 05/2006

Doc. # 35-05-20/07/05/07-M